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Open Media Event

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Ambassador Wohlers: Good afternoon everybody, welcome back to the Embassy. It's been a while since we have had one of our open press events. A number of people have asked when we were going to do another one, so we decided this would be a good time, especially before the press of holiday events begins. So I'm glad to see you all here today.

We have had a couple of events recently, the biggest of course, from our perspective, were elections in the United States on November 6th. It was a long, loud, sometimes boisterous campaign. A number of you were at our post-election breakfast last week, so you watched some of the returns coming in and the speeches with us.

The good thing about the election is that it was an opportunity for candidates to get out and criss-cross the country. They gave numerous interviews, lots of speeches, and they debated each other openly on television, presenting their views. They presented very different views of the future of the United States and where they thought it should go. In the end, American voters were able to exercise the most powerful weapon they have, which is the vote, to get together on November 6th and make a decision, and they voted for President Obama.

Those of you who were at our breakfast saw the results come in. You watched the very gracious concession speech by Governor Romney and the equally gracious acceptance speech by President Obama. The idea they both centered on was, now that the election was over, it was time to come together and do what is best for the country as a whole, putting aside their campaign statements and looking forward to the future.

I had a number of Macedonians come up to me afterwards and say oh, those were wonderful speeches, but that could never happen in Macedonia. I hope that is not the case, that it won't be the case in the future. I think it is clear that in this country, as well, there are very big differences of opinion on many issues, and a great deal of discussion, and that's good. That

is the way democracy should be. But the mark of a mature democracy, obviously, is that in the end, after an election, the candidates and their supporters can come together and say we've had our campaign, we've had our election, and now we want to do what's best for the long term interests of our country as a whole, not just the individual, more narrow interests of a party or of an individual. When you can reach that point, you have a mature democracy, and I am hopeful that Macedonia will soon be there if you are not there already.

Many people have said that in a democracy, the voters get the government that they deserve. That is because voters not only have the right to vote, but they have a responsibility when they vote to make a wise decision. They need to be informed, they need to make an informed decision, and they cannot blame other people for the democracy they have because that's the way democracies work. You vote and you get what you voted for. That's all part of the development and maturation of a democracy.

The other thing that a number of people asked me that day and since is what effect will this have on U.S. foreign policy in the region, and particularly on Macedonia. I can say pretty confidently that it will have no impact. We have had a long history of friendship and partnership going back to the beginning of Macedonia's independence, and I am confident that will continue. It's been that way through Republican administrations; it's been that way through Democratic administrations; it's been that way through numerous governments here in Macedonia; and I'm sure that will continue. We have worked very hard to help Macedonia move forward toward its own stated goals of integration into the Euro-Atlantic community, and of developing a more prosperous and dynamic economy that offers more jobs, all of which will be better for all the citizens of Macedonia. We will continue to do that. We will continue to be friends and partners. I think I can honestly say, and we always try to be honest, that Macedonia has no better friend or partner than the United States, and that will continue in the future.

With that, I'm happy to take any questions you might have.

Media: You say that the U.S. is the best ally, the best friend of Macedonia. Do you think that Macedonia thinks that, too?

Ambassador Wohlers: You'll have to ask Macedonians that. I can't answer on behalf of Macedonians. But I hope so. I think

we have done a lot to show our commitment and partnership with the people of Macedonia. We have worked together on many different issues both locally and around the world. We have been partners in Iraq. We have been and are partners in Afghanistan even now. We have worked consistently to try to improve the economy here. We have worked consistently to help Macedonia move toward integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. But in the end, you have to ask Macedonians that question. I can't answer on their behalf. I have talked to many Macedonians who feel that way, though. I suppose there are some who don't. There is always a diversity of opinion. But I certainly hope that most Macedonians feel that way. We've spent a lot of money, a lot of time, a lot of effort to do what we think is helpful for Macedonia and what Macedonians want us to do. I hope that it is a two-way street.

Media: What do you expect from the new round of the negotiations in the name issue with Mr. Nimetz and the two negotiators from Greece and Macedonia? And I have another question, how do you comment on the Macedonian response to the Greek memorandum? Thank you.

Ambassador Wohlers: I'm happy to see that Mr. Nimetz is hosting meetings of the negotiators - on Monday and Tuesday, I think, in New York. Obviously no one session is going to solve the problem. As we know, they have been holding sessions for quite some time, but it is good to keep that going. They haven't met for a while. The United States, as I have said, strongly supports the UN process led by Mr. Nimetz. I know you know that. We will support whatever comes out of that process, whatever the two sides -- Greece and Macedonia -- agree. We think this should have been solved long ago. We strongly support Macedonia's entry into the EU and into NATO, and obviously the name issue is a key part of that. So I'm very pleased they are having the discussions next week, and we'll have to see. I can't predict what will come out of that.

In terms of your second question, it was what?

Media: Memorandum.

Ambassador Wohlers: I think the response was actually a pretty good one. It was positive. It didn't answer all the questions, but no one expected it to. This was not some kind of negotiating process going back and forth. These are Memoranda of Understanding. These were setting out some of the views from each side. The Greeks made it clear when they sent their first

version to Skopje that it was not a take it or leave it document. It was open to discussion. I believe the response that went back was, in general, a positive one. It didn't address every question but I didn't expect it to. I don't think anybody did. It is good to have dialogue between Macedonia and Greece and that is what's needed to move forward to resolve the issues. If you don't have dialogue, if you don't go back and forth and discuss these things, you're going nowhere, so I think this was a good step forward.

Media: I would like to ask you what is your opinion about the debate that's going on in the Assembly about the new law of the ex-warriors (defenders) of the conflict of 2001, the new proposal for the law. And the two sides... you probably know...

Ambassador Wohlers: I have heard about that. That is an issue that is going on in the Parliament, so I'm not going to get involved in the details of something that is for the legislators and the voters of Macedonia to decide. I would say it is important in the discussion - in any discussion, this one or any other - in which there are significant differences of opinion, that the debate be conducted responsibly, that they use mature approaches to the problems. I think inflammatory rhetoric or rhetoric that increases tensions is not helpful and should be avoided. And politicians in general need to be aware that what they say has consequences. If you say something very inflammatory, it is not going to help the discussion move forward. If you want to be a responsible political figure in this country or any other, you need to be aware of what you're saying, what the consequences might be, and then do what you can to help solve problems and not create more of them. It is important to be mature in the discussion and not create more problems and more tensions.

Media: Let's say you know about the relations between Macedonia and negotiation about the name with Greece, and let's say in the future (inaudible) possibly to get in the European Union, right? But please, does the Embassy and the American government in Washington and around the world know that the last six years are getting bad, the [inaudible] relations between Macedonia nationality with the Albanians and other nationalities? That something is going wrong with our agreements? And will European Union, if they get in the Union, will be [inaudible] future with over one million Albanians living here? Does American government know about the relations today, how this goes? There's many many stories happening day after day, raising [inaudible] and attacking people and families and [inaudible]?

Ambassador Wohlers: You're talking about relations inside Macedonia?

Media: Right. Thank you, sir.

Ambassador Wohlers: Well, we are aware of what is going on in the country as a whole, and we have a wide range of contacts. We are talking with people all the time. We read the media, we watch television. So I think we are pretty aware of what's going on in this country.

I think movement into the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic community as a whole will be very positive for the country in many ways, one of which is in improving inter-ethnic relations. We know it is important to both communities. The ethnic Albanian community in particular has commented frequently on how important it is to move into the Euro-Atlantic community, but this is important for both communities, I believe. I think being in the European Union or in NATO will be a positive impulse for the improvement of inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia. It will be an impulse for positive movement on relations with neighbors as well. So I think it is all to the good. That is one reason, not the only one, but one of the reasons we support Macedonia moving in to the Euro-Atlantic community -- the European Union and NATO.

Media: Are you optimistic that the member states of the EU will give Macedonia a date for start of negotiations for membership? [Inaudible]. The second question, why the State Secretary Clinton was avoiding to visit Macedonia when she was here (in the region)?

Ambassador Wohlers: In terms of the European Union, obviously the United States is not a member so whatever I say is to be interpreted as someone from the outside looking in. We can't tell the European Union what to do and we don't. We work closely with them. We strongly support, as I've already said several times, the movement of Macedonia into the European Union and NATO. We think it is good for Macedonia, we think it is good for the region, we think it is good for Europe. But again, we're not in the Union so we do not have a vote. They are not going to ask us. But I think you can see from the fact that the Secretary -- Secretary Clinton - made a joint visit to a couple of countries with Lady Ashton recently shows that we are working closely with the European Union in the Balkan region in general. We support the European Commission's recommendation, the fourth

in a row, that Macedonia be given an accession date. We think that would be good, as I said, for Macedonia, and we fully support that. We do not, unfortunately, have a vote, otherwise we would vote in favor.

In terms of the recent visit to the region, Secretary Clinton obviously has a very busy schedule. She has lots of places to go. If you have been watching, she is already off now to Australia, Cambodia, several other countries in Asia, so she was home for five or six days between trips. She is always going someplace, and her schedule is packed. She can't go everywhere. She goes to countries where there are immediate issues to be resolved or where there is a specific reason to be there. There just was not time to come here. Nor was there time to go to a couple of other countries in the region; Montenegro and Slovenia both were asking for visits and there just was not enough time. So I wouldn't read that much into that. She has said clearly that she is firmly committed to the forward movement of democracy and economic prosperity in the Balkans, of moving all these countries into the European perspective. She called President Ivanov right after the trip to express those same sentiments and to thank him for our partnership in the many areas around the world that we are working on together. So I would not read that much into that.

But as I said, we're strongly supportive of Macedonia moving into the European Union.

Media: The name issue is not something which is urgent to be resolved?

Ambassador Wohlers: It is urgent, but it has been urgent for 20 years, so I guess it depends on how you define that. Obviously there are limits on how far Macedonia can move forward into Euro-Atlantic integration without resolving the name issue, so in that sense, it is urgent. We know the results of Bucharest in 2008, when it was said that once the name issue is resolved, Macedonia is immediately moving into NATO, they will be a member right away.

In terms of the European Union, there are many different approaches to it, but one way or the other they are going to have to resolve the name issue relatively quickly. So it is urgent and we think this has gone on way too long. It should have been resolved a long time ago. We will continue to do everything we can to help resolve the issue.

Media: I think we all know that Macedonia will not be in the EU any time soon, even if Greece decides to stop their illogical stance. Is there anything that the U.S. can do on a more unilateral level?

I know Ambassador Reeker did a very nice thing by getting these grants for the church frescos in Ohrid a few years ago, which was appreciated I'm sure by the people. But the last truly brave thing that was done was when George Bush was reelected and recognized the country's constitutional name.

So in the absence of any sort of action from the European side, is there anything that we (the U.S.) can do in the meantime? I don't know - abolition of visas or certain other programs? Because at this moment (the situation) is not giving the people a whole lot of confidence about something to look forward to.

Ambassador Wohlers: You're right in the sense that even if the EU process began tomorrow it would take a number of years to work through all the chapters; that is true of any country that is joining. So that won't be happening overnight.

I think we do a lot of things in this country to help and to give ideas for the future and hope for the future. You mentioned... I'm not sure the church frescos in and of themselves are going to do that, but we do a lot of preservation work through the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. We just started a new project in Kuceviste just a few months ago, so we do a lot of that sort of thing. We have large USAID programs. We are working on economic issues, on rule of law and democracy issues, on education, in particular inter-ethnic integration in education. So we are spending a lot of money and a lot of effort on lots of different programs here.

I think though that people have to also come to the determination that no outside country is going to come in and solve all the problems for Macedonia. We can assist, we can help, and we have, and not just the United States, but other countries have as well. In the end, the name issue is a bilateral issue that has to be resolved between Greece and Macedonia. That is the main roadblock. Not the only one, but the main roadblock on the path to Euro-Atlantic integration. It is the only one in terms of NATO. We are prepared to assist in any way that we can, but we can't make it happen alone. People have to work on that and take responsibility for those actions and we will be there to assist in any way that we can.

Media: I wanted to ask two questions. The first one being, is it smart for Macedonia to attempt to outsource the resolution to the name issue to other countries, asking the EU and the United States to implement pressure?

My second question is, is that the obstacle to a solution to the name issue or demonstrating a democratic capacity to resolve the bilateral issue which is a very important part in the international organization?

Ambassador Wohlers: On your first question, I don't necessarily think that Macedonia is trying to outsource the negotiation process. They are looking for assistance from lots of different people, and that is fine. There are a number of countries that would like to assist in the process, and to the extent that they can, that is all to the good. If we or if other countries can be of assistance in resolving this difficult issue, I think there should be an openness to that. I don't think that's the same as outsourcing.

I think in the end, the final political decisions, the real decisions have to be made by the two principal parties themselves. They can't be forced upon them from outside. That just won't work.

On your second question, again, it was about --

Media: Is this whole thing about the capability of Macedonia to solve --

Ambassador Wohlers: Right, whether it's --

Media: -- or demonstrating democratic capacity?

Ambassador Wohlers: I think it's a mixture. Whenever you are dealing with key issues that confront any democratic country - which Macedonia is - it is part of the democratic process as well. I mentioned earlier the key role the voters have. The most powerful weapon that individuals have in a democracy is their vote. And so people should vote intelligently, they should vote responsibly, and they should vote for policies which they think will move their country forward.

If you think one group is not moving a country forward, then you vote for a different group. If that group doesn't work, then you find another group you think is going to move the country

forward. So decisions that leaders make are part of the democratic process by definition.

Media: Mr. Ambassador, last time when you talked to us in this --

Ambassador Wohlers: This very room.

Media: Yes, in this room, you were talking about reforms and freedom of media as great challenges for the country. What do you think now about these issues? Is it better? Situation is better? Worse?

Ambassador Wohlers: We have had, just this week, the passage of the legislation on defamation, which we welcome. It is a step forward. We will have to see, of course, how it is implemented. It is one thing to pass a law; it's something else to implement it effectively and well. But definitely, that is a step forward and we welcome that along with the OSCE and a number of others who have been very outspoken in welcoming that change.

The media, and freedom of media, is the life blood of democracy. If you clamp that off, if you don't have freedom of discussion, if you don't have the ability to get different views out, the ability to discuss different views publicly, then it is very difficult to have a strong democracy. So the media and the people have a very strong responsibility in that sense. You are in a sense the blood vessels. You are carrying the blood around the country in terms of freedom of discussion, freedom of debate. That is very important.

This is a significant step forward, but it is not a magic pill for the problem. There are still issues of media transparency, media ownership, pressure on the media, financial issues that I know the media face here. Those are all issues that we need to continue to look at, but we do welcome this step forward on defamation.

Media: To play devil's advocate here. In the beginning you said that Macedonia has no better friend than the U.S. I would challenge in a way that Turkey right now is playing a more constructive role in the country. Maybe not on the huge level that the U.S. can provide, but in terms of investment and non-interference at least publicly with the political life, with access to travel, with access to education and various other things that can be done.

So I want to know in the option of Macedonia not joining the EU, not joining the United States or so on, how you see the cooperation with Turkey can perform let's say to improve Macedonia's situation.

Ambassador Wohlers: I didn't know there was a proposal out there to join the United States. Maybe I missed that someplace. No one's actually raised that with me.

It is great to see that Turkey is involved here constructively and positively. I think that is a good thing. Turkey is a strong ally of the United States as well, and we're very happy that they're involved here in investments and many other areas. They are very near. They have a very active and interested business community that knows this area pretty well. So I think it is easier in some ways for their businesses to become involved because, as I said, proximity is useful. The market is much closer to Turkey obviously than the United States.

I don't believe we are competing with Turkey to be the best friend of Macedonia. I have just said that Macedonia has no better friend than the U.S. I firmly believe that. We've been here for a long time doing lots of things for a wide spectrum of society in this country. I don't think we are interfering - you referred to it as that, and I would not use that phrase. We want Macedonia to be the best country it can be. We want it to move into the Euro-Atlantic community. To do that it has to meet certain criteria. That's just the way it is. We didn't set those criteria. If they want to meet those criteria and move into the Euro-Atlantic community and move forward, which we think is the best answer for the long term here, and I think most Macedonians think that too, then there are certain criteria they have to meet, and we are here to try to help them to do that. We are not going to try to help Macedonia do anything it doesn't want to do. That is up to the voice of the people, the voice of the country to make that decision. We are just here to help.

You asked something about visas earlier. The visa waiver program, which I think is probably what you were referring to, is a statutory program. Once Macedonia meets the criteria, I'm sure we would look at it. It has to do with the number of visa turn-downs on an annual basis and some other criteria. It's a legal statute set forth by Congress. We don't have any flexibility on that. It has been an issue with different countries including, in the past, Greece and Poland and others.

Once they meet the criteria, we can easily move forward on that, but it's not something we can just do automatically.

Media: Is it being considered now?

Ambassador Wohlers: Macedonia does not meet the criteria yet. If you want the exact criteria I can get that for you. I don't have it off the top of my head, but --

Media: The government is aware of this --

Ambassador Wohlers: Oh, sure.

Media: Interesting.

Media: The U.S. and Turkey best friends of Macedonia. In the last six years [inaudible] --

Ambassador Wohlers: I'm not saying they're the only best friends. I don't want --

Media: Some of the best friends.

Ambassador Wohlers: Some of the best friends. Good.

Media: [Inaudible] meetings at high level between Turkey President [inaudible] Prime Minister. At the same time [inaudible]. [Inaudible].

Ambassador Wohlers: And Vice President Biden.

Media: And not to mention that Secretary Clinton was only thirty minutes away Skopje. And [inaudible] difficult to believe [inaudible].

Ambassador Wohlers: Close.

Media: One hour it takes. And [inaudible] to Washington and [inaudible]. For me, maybe I'm biased, but it is illogical.

Ambassador Wohlers: You are free to call it whatever you want. As I said, there are certain realities in her travel schedule and what she can do and can't do. I've already explained that so there is nothing much more I can say on that.

The Prime Minister was in Washington last year and met with Secretary Clinton and Vice President Biden, so those were pretty

high level meetings. I wouldn't say there have been no high-level meetings. We've had other people come here. Obviously DAS Reeker has been here twice this year. We have had a number of other high level visitors; a couple of generals that have been here, including the Commander of all U.S. Army forces in Europe, so we've had a number of important people here. I'm sure there will be more in the future. I can't necessarily predict when.

As I say, Secretary Clinton can't go everywhere. They fit in what they can and they look at their planning with different factors in mind, and we will just have to wait and see what happens next.

Media: Mr. Ambassador, how many [inaudible]?

Ambassador Wohlers: I couldn't hear you.

Media: The [inaudible] United States [inaudible]. [Inaudible]?

Ambassador Wohlers: I said a moment ago that the United States strongly favors the European Commission recommendations over this year and the last three years before that, four years in a row, that Macedonia be given an accession date. As I said, we are not a member of the EU, but I think we have made it pretty clear through all of our meetings that we strongly favor Macedonia's movement into the EU. As I said, we're not a member, we can't vote, but I think all the members of the EU are pretty aware of what our stand is. I wouldn't be concerned about that.

Media: I want to ask you about the local elections, the upcoming local elections. You know in Kicevo Macedonian voters are appealing to gather and vote one candidate. It seems that's the same that will happen with the Albanians. Do you expect a fair process not only in Kicevo but in total? And do you expect that the voters lists, the voters register, will be cleaned in time?

Ambassador Wohlers: In terms of the voters lists, that is a complicated process that we are not directly involved in, so I can't really predict how it will work out. I know the government has people working on that. We have been looking at that as part of regular meetings with the Election Commission and with Deputy Prime Minister Arifi over the last six to nine months, just in terms of how that process is going. I'm certainly hopeful that they will be done in time.

In terms of Kicevo itself, I'm certainly expecting free and fair elections there and elsewhere. That is what we are hoping for. I know that other countries and other organizations like OSCE will also be expecting that and looking for that, and I'm sure we will have observers here as we've had in the past to see how the process goes.

I think local elections are extremely important because, in the end, local elections and local officials are the most important form of democracy. They are the ones that are at the level of the people.

I mentioned we had our elections last November 6th. Everybody talked about the presidential elections, especially overseas, but actually that was just one relatively small part of our elections. We have elections in small villages and towns and states all across the country. That is really where people get involved because that is what affects them the most, what happens at the local level. That is really the purest form of democracy, and that is what I think is true here as well. People are affected by what goes on in their towns, in their opstinas [communities], and that is where they really see the impact on their daily lives.

So we will be looking closely to see what we can do to ensure that a democratic process does extend freely and fairly to the local elections in Kicevo and elsewhere.

Media: A question about nationality and [inaudible] in Macedonia. [Inaudible] over 100,000 members which are leaving out of the country from Macedonia to the border of Albania and wherever [inaudible] Macedonian. And even there are over 25 percent of Albania living [inaudible] Does the American Embassy know that the last two months over 100,000 members which are living out of the country [inaudible] got the ID cards?

Ambassador Wohlers: As I understood, you are alleging that there are irregularities in the issuance of voting cards? Is that what you are saying?

Media: There are reports that people are crossing the border and getting Macedonian IDs illegally.

Ambassador Wohlers: Right. As I mentioned earlier, that is all part of this process of making sure that the election lists are accurate, or as accurate as possible. Obviously I'm not on the

election board. I can't do that myself and we are not involved in that directly. We will be working closely with the appropriate officials to ensure that people have the right to vote, and that the people who don't, do not vote. Obviously, that is not something that we can do. That is something that the officials and the citizens of Macedonia have to demand. If they think there is a problem, then it's up to them to step forward and talk about it and try to find a way to resolve that. We can look at it, we can help, but in the end this is not our country. We can do what we can do. But it is the responsibility of Macedonian citizens to step forward if they think there is a problem. They would need to step forward and do what they can to resolve the problem and to bring it to people's attention.

As I said, in a democracy you vote, and you get the government you deserve. People have to get out there and vote. If they think something is not legitimate, then they have to get out there and do what they can to change that by the way they vote, by who they talk to, and by taking to their local officials. That is part of a democracy. We can't do it from the United States. We can help, we can assist, we can observe, but in the end, it is the responsibility of Macedonians to be the major movers on those issues.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. [Inaudible] meeting [inaudible]. The second question is what do you think about [inaudible]?

Ambassador Wohlers: The lustration process.

On your first question, I know there has been a lot of - I'll just call it interesting - news coverage of that meeting (with Menduh Thaci) and other meetings of that type (with different political leaders).

If people think that I or the United States Embassy takes a position on favoring any one party or any group of parties, they are just uninformed or misinformed. I know there have been some stories to the effect that we have been involved. Whoever wrote them just didn't know what they were talking about. They are wrong. It is just flat wrong.

I do not favor one party over another, neither does the Embassy. We never have, we never will. It is up to the voters of Macedonia to do so. When people write misleading articles like that, they are not really being very constructive or responsible in terms of journalism.

So what he (the political leader) or others will do is purely up to them. We do not tell them what to do. We have not and we won't.

On your second question on lustration, I think the process needs to be - like every other process here in this country - one that will move the country forward politically and socially towards more reconciliation, towards more understanding, and not something which creates additional divisions. Any process which creates additional divisions rather than solving problems is not helpful to the country. That may serve somebody's interest in the short term, but in the long term, as I said before several times, everybody needs to look at what is in the best interests of Macedonia as a whole for the long term. If more people do that, the country will move along a lot faster.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. Because of the current crisis in the government [inaudible]. What do you think about holding parliamentary elections [inaudible]? Does Macedonia have the capacity to do elections at the same time? And do you think [inaudible]?

Ambassador Wohlers: The question is about early elections in March, whether I think the crisis now will lead to early elections and whether it will be good or not.

Everyone is always asking me for predictions of what will happen in Macedonian politics. If I knew all the answers it would be great, but I don't. I don't know what will happen between now and March. I am sure a lot will depend on how things go in December. But again, it is up to the political leaders to decide if they think they want to have parliamentary elections in addition to local elections in March. I see no reason physically why they couldn't do that. I think the country is capable of doing both sets of elections at once. I don't think that is the issue. Whether it is wise to do it or not, to have elections at that point, is something that I think the people of Macedonia have to decide. I am not going to give advice on whether they should have elections in March or not.

I think again, what the leaders and hopefully the people of Macedonia have to look at is what is in the best interests of Macedonia as a whole for the long term. If that is your guiding theme for all the decisions you make in politics, I think the country as a whole will be better off. I think the political leaders will be better off. So I think that should be the main

question that they have to look at before they decide what to do in March.

Media: [Inaudible] even though it's a political issue.

Ambassador Wohlers: Everything's political.

Media: How do you like the movie "The Third Half?" I know you have seen it. How you like it? Do you expect that it might go to the Academy Awards?

Ambassador Wohlers: Just as I'm not in the EU and can't vote, I can't vote in Hollywood either. I'd love to vote there -- I'd rather vote in Hollywood than on the EU, I think it would be more fun.

I have seen the movie. I thought it pointed out historical issues which people probably have not looked at here for a long time and in the region. In that sense I thought it was interesting. I think it is unfortunate that it has become a sort of political... is being seen as a political film. I'm not sure if it was intended that way or not, but it is being seen that way. I keep my vote to myself on how I vote on anything, but it was an interesting film. I don't know if anybody here has not seen it. Probably all of you have seen it. I would recommend it. But I hope it won't become a political issue to cause further divisions between Macedonia and Bulgaria, for example. It shouldn't.

If you focus on relatively small things like that, I think you lose the big picture of what's better for the strategic interests and the future economic and political interests of both Macedonia and Bulgaria and what's better for the region as a whole.

Again, I think it is a mistake to focus on small things. You need to focus on the bigger things, what is in everybody's interests over the long term. I think the movie should be a small subset of that larger question.

Thank you all very much.

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